

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 PM-07

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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SS-20 OMB-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 ACDA-19 AF-10 SSO-00 /165 W

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R 151431Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1536

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 924

BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF UR IS

SUBJ: SOVIET POSTURE IN MIDDLE EAST

1. MFA SOVIET AND EASTEUROPE AFFAIRS DIRECTOR DAGAN TOLD
US FEB 14 THAT IN HIS OPINION SOVIET RELATIONS WITH ARAB WORLD,
ESPECIALLY EGYPT, WERE IN PRECARIOUS STATE. AS RESULT,
MOSCOW RIGHT NOW COULD NOT EVEN CONTEMPLATE ESTABLISHING
RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. EVEN IF RESTORATION OF FULL US-EGYPTIAN
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WERE ANNOUNCED TOMORROW, DAGAN SAID MOSCOW
COULD NOT AFFORD TO RESUME SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ISRAEL, AS CAIRO
MIGHT USE THIS AS PRETEXT FOR FURTHER CURTAILMENT OF ITS SOVIET
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RELATIONSHIP. ONLY WHEN USSR WAS CONVINCED EGYPT AND SYRIA

WOULD SWALLOW RESTORATION OF SOVIET-ISRAELI TIES WOULD MOSCOW BE PREPARED TO MAKE SUCH MOVE AND ABOSRB INEVITABLE FLAK FROM IRAQIS AND OTHER ARAB EXTREMISTS.

2. DAGAN CONTINUED THAT HE BELIEVED SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO REPAIR TIES WITH ISRAEL ANTEDATED CURRENT SERIOUS DETERIORATION WHICH HE SAW IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS AS RESULT OF GROWING US-EGYPTIAN CORDIALITY. DAGAN FELT EBAN HAD GIVEN UNDULY OPTIMISTIC INTERPRETATION TO SOVIET INTENTIONS ON BASIS OF EBAN-GROMYKO AND EVRON-VINOGRADOV CONVERSATIONS IN GENEVA AT TURN OF YEAR. (NOTE: EVRON HAS TOLD US HIS TALK WITH VINOGRADOV DID NOT ACTUALLY GO VERY WELL.) DAGAN SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO SOVIET INITIATIVES SUBSEQUENTLY ANYWHERE IN WORLD TO HLD FURTHER TALKS WITH ISRAELIS. ACCORDING TO DAGAN, SOVIET DISINTEREST IN RESUMING TIES WITH ISRAEL SOON WAS NOT BECAUSE MOSCOW FAILED TO RECOGNIZE CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGES IT WOULD GAIN FROM HAVING SUCH RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY ABILITY THIS WOULD GIVE USSR TO POSE MORE CREDIBLY AS MATURE WORLD POWER INTERESTED IN MEDIATING REGIONAL CONFLICTS. REASON WAS THAT BRILLIANT US MIDDLE EAST DIPLOMACY IN DECEMBER 1973 AND JANUARY 1974 HAD PUT SOVIETS OVER A BARREL. WHILE SOVIETS WERE LOCKED BY SECRETARY'S ADROIT HANDLING INTO GENEVA CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION, THEY COULD ONLY LOOK ON HELPLESSLY WHILE SECRETARY DID ALL THE REAL WORK ELSEWHERE. US HAD WON MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN ARAB WORLD THROUGH CAIRO'S CORDIALITY AND IN DUE COURSE COULD IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH MANY OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, ALL AT SOVIET EXPENSE.

4. DAGAN SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT QUESTION OF HOW LONG SOVIETS WOULD PUT UP WITH THIS SITUATION. IT WAS TRUE THAT ANY MAJOR BEHIND-SCENES SOVIET MISCHIEF TO UNDERMINE MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKING PROCESS CARRIED RISK FOR MOSCOW OF HARMING DETENTE, SINCE AMERICANS WOULD QUICKLY DISCERN MALEVOLENT SOVIET HAND. IT ALSO WAS TRUE THAT DISRUPTING PROCESS COULD CONCEIVABLY LEAD TO DOWNFALL OF SADAT, WHO HAD STAKED HIS REPUTATION ON BEING ABLE TO GET SETTLEMENT SATISFACTORY TO EGYPT IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE BY PEACEFUL MEANS. BUT IF SADAT LOOKED INCREASINGLY TO SOVIETS AS IF HE WERE SECRETLY IN LEAGUE WITH WASHINGTON, MOSCOW MIGHT EVENTUALLY DECIDE TO WRITE OFF ITS INVESTMENT IN EGYPT AND CONCENTRATE ON OTHER

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FRIENDLY ARAB STATES. TO REVERSE TREND TOWARD IMPROVEMENT OF US STANCE IN ARAB WORLD, SOVIETS MIGHT FIGURE THEY DID NOT NEED ACTUALLY TO TORPEDO PEACE EFFORTS, BUT ONLY QUIETLY TODELAY THEM, AND THEY MIGHT ESTIMATE THAT THEY COULD GET AWAY WITH AT LEAST THIS AMOUNT OF MISCHIEF WITHOUT BEING CAUGHT BY US. KEATING

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